

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MADRID 03516 230323Z

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10

SAJ-01 SAM-01 OMB-01 ACDA-05 AID-05 EB-07 /087 W

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R 221610Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1926

AMEMBASSY LISBON

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 3516

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SP, PO

SUBJECT: SPANISH VIEWS OF PORTUGUESE DEVELOPMENTS

REF: LISBON 2786

1. SUMMARY: MFA PREOCCUPIED WITH INCREASING RADICALIZATION OF PORTUGUESE REVOLUTION, MARGINALIZATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES, AND SIGNS OF BREAKDOWN IN MILITARY DISCIPLINE. TRIUMVIRATE OF COUTINHO, OTELO DE CARVALHO, AND FABIAO SEEN HERE AS EMERGING AS KEY POLITICAL/MILITARY POWER CENTER WITH MODERATES IN AFM MOVED TO SIDELINES. REVOLUTIONARY CONDITIONS IN ANGOLA SEEN AS OBLIGING PORTUGAL TO MAINTAIN TROOPS IN FORMER COLONY WITH UNFORESEEABLE CONSEQUENCES ON COHESION OF ARMED FORCES AT HOME. DESPITE PROVOCATIONS, GOS DETERMINED TO ADHERE TO POLICY OF NON-INTERVENTION IN PORTUGUESE AFFAIRS. END SUMMARY

2. IN COURSE OF PERIODICAL EXCHANGE OF INFO ON PORTUGAL WITH MFA MAY 20, EMBOFF BRIEFED DIRECTOR FOR EUROPEAN
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PAGE 02 MADRID 03516 230323Z

AFFAIRS DEL PINO ON MAY 17-18 INCIDENTS IN LISBON (REFTEL).

DEL PINO SAID THAT RAL-1 ARTILLERY UNIT WAS WELL-KNOWN AS ONE OF PRINCIPAL LEFTIST POWER BASES OF AFM; IT WAS ONE OF FIRST MILITARY UNITS TO HAVE GENUINE "SOVIET" WHERE NON-COMS AND SOLDIERS COULD IMPOSE THEIR WILL ON OFFICERS. MFA, HE ADDED, WAS INCREASINGLY CONCERNED WITH RADICALIZATION OF PORTUGUESE ARMED FORCES AND SIGNS OF DETERIORATING DISCIPLINE. THIS WAS INTERNAL PORTUGUESE PROBLEM AND FOR SPAIN BECAUSE OF LONG OPEN BORDER. ALTHOUGH SPANISH EMBASSY HAD NOT BEEN OBJECT OF ANY HOSTILE ACTION SUCH AS OCCURRED MAY 18 TO U.S. EMBASSY, MFA BELIEVED IT PRESAGED NO GOOD FOR OTHER MISSIONS REPRESENTED IN LISBON.

3. IN RESPONSE TO MFA REQUEST FOR DETAILS OF ALLEGED NATO MANEUVER SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE AT END OF MAY ADJACENT TO PORTUGAL, EMBOFF SAID THAT A SEVEN-NATION (INCLUDING PORTUGAL) NAVAL EXERCISE OF COMNAVFORLANT WOULD TAKE PLACE MAY 27-29; SOME PARTICIPATING VESSELS WOULD VISIT LISBON MAY 29-JUNE 2. DEL PINO SPECULATED THAT THERE MIGHT BE SOME INCIDENTS BUT EMBOFF REASSURED HIM THAT EXERCISE WAS LONG-PLANNED ROUTINE AND SHOULD NOT LEAD TO TROUBLE UNLESS LEFTIST FORCES HAD REASON TO PROVOKE IT.

4. IN MFA VIEW, DESIGNATION OF VASCO GONCALVES AS PORTUGUESE REP AT NATO SUMMIT REVEALED LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN COSTA GOMES WHO MIGHT BE SUSPECTED OF BEING DUPED INTO NATO POLITICAL MANEUVER TOWARDS PORTUGAL INIMICAL TO AFM OBJECTIVES.

5. GOS BELIEVES FAVORABLE ELECTION OUTCOME WAS NOW THREATENED BY AFM MANEUVERINGS TO ENSURE ITS ABSOLUTE CONTROL OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS. REAL POWER SEEN AS GRAVITATING TOWARDS TRIUMVIRATE OF ADMIRAL COUTINHO, ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF FABIAO AND COPCON LEADER OTELO DE CARVALHO. IN MFA OPINION, LATTER TWO ARE ONLY KEY MILITARY LEADERS WHO HAVE NOT "BURNED THEMSELVES OUT" WITH PUBLIC, PARTICULARLY COUTINHO ("ATTRACTIVENESS OF YUL BRYNNER COMBINED WITH ABILITY OF THE DEVIL").

6. DETERIORATING ANGOLAN SITUATION COULD OBLIGE PORTUGAL TO CONTINUE POLICEMAN'S ROLE IN ANGOLA, DEL
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MADRID 03516 230323Z

PINO SAID. IF SO, THEN FEEDBACK ON HOME-BASED ARMED FORCES AND AFM COULD BE EXTREMELY SERIOUS BY ADDING ONE MORE FACTOR OF POTENTIAL DISORDER. RENEGING ON BASIC PRINCIPAL OF APRIL 25 REVOLUTION AND CONTINUED INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA WOULD DRAIN ECONOMY AT CRITICAL TIME AND EXACERBATE TENSIONS WITHIN ARMED FORCES AND BETWEEN LATTER AND POPULATION.

7. DEL PINO SAID GOS ADHERED STRICTLY TO POLICY OF NON-INTERVENTION, ALTHOUGH FACED WITH DIFFICULT PROVOCATIONS FROM LISBON. GOS WOULD NOT COUNTER EACH ONE OF PORTUGUESE ACCUSATIONS, BUT ONLY MOST SERIOUS ONES. CARVALHO RECENTLY GAVE TV INTERVIEW TO SPANISH MEDIA, FOR EXAMPLE, REFERRING TO "SOCIALIZING IBERIA"; GOS WOULD NOT ALLOW BROADCAST OF INTERVIEW. DEL PINO REPORTED THAT GOS HAD BEEN SHOCKED BY SEEMING COLLUSION BETWEEN PORTUGUESE ACTIVISTS IN ELVA WHO WERE IN CONTACT WITH JOURNALISTS IN BADAJOZ (SPAIN). LOCAL BADAJOZ PAPER ENDED UP BY ADOPTING SOME OF "REVOLUTIONARY RHETORIC" OF ELVA. EMBOFF OBSERVED THAT PAPER HAD RECENTLY BEEN FIVEN STIFF FINE, BUT DEL PINO DENIED THAT FINE WAS IMPOSED BECAUSE OF "POLITICAL COMMENTARY".

7. COMMENT: GOS SENSITIVITY TO FALLOUT OF PORTUGUESE DEVELOPMENTS IN SPAIN IS WELL ILLUSTRATED BY ITS HANDLING OF CARVALHO INTERVIEW AND BADAJOZ NEWSPAPER'S COMMENTARY. ALTHOUGH CROSS-BORDER PROBLEMS COULD PROVE SERIOUS IN INTER-STATE RELATIONS, MOST SERIOUS THREAT TO SPAIN IN PORTUGUESE DEVELOPMENTS IS LESS TANGIBLE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT ON POLITICAL FORCES SEEKING TO FIND PLACE IN POST-FRANCO TRANSITION PERIOD.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, POLITICAL LEADERS, ARRESTS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 MAY 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975MADRID03516
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750181-0299
From: MADRID
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750528/aaaaaynf.tel
Line Count: 139
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 LISBON 2786
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 MAY 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <03 OCT 2003 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SPANISH VIEWS OF PORTUGUESE DEVELOPMENTS
TAGS: PFOR, SP, PO
To: STATE LISBON
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006